



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Stakeholder engagement workshop looks at communication strategy developed to raise awareness and educate the public on water re-use

26 November 2018

The Department of Water and Sanitation hosted a stakeholder engagement workshop at its Head Office in Pretoria on Friday 23 November 2018, aimed to enhance the understanding and promote informed decision-making related to water re-use in South Africa.

The workshop brought under one roof several sector stakeholders including researchers from the Water Research Commission (WRC) and the University of Limpopo, who engaged extensively on key components of a communication strategy developed to raise awareness and to educate the public on water re-use

Dr Nonhlanhla Kalebaila of the WRC emphasised that water re-use is an essential component of long-term water planning in a water-scarce environment.

“The Water Research Commission (WRC) initiated a project which stems from the statement in the National Strategy for Water Re-use, which is annexure D of the National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS II),” said Dr Kalebaila.

She added that the concept and implementation of water re-use will require a focused and sustained public education programme to develop and entrench awareness of different facets of water use, and specifically water re-use.

Presenting on water re-use in the context of the department’s Water and Sanitation Master Plan, Tendani Nditwani said the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan (NW&SMP) is a “Call to Action” that seeks to rally all Water Sector Stakeholders in South Africa to work together to address the challenges confronting the Water and Sanitation Sector

“The Plan enables the achievement of the targets set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision for 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Goal 6 2030), of affordable and reliable access to sufficient and safe water and hygienic sanitation for socio-economic growth and well-being, with due regard to the environment,” said Nditwani.

The Plan is also geared towards the 5 key Strategic Pillars of the Department which include the National Water Resources and Services Authority, National Water Resources and Services Regulator, Water Resources and Services Value Chain, Water Resources and Services Master Plan and Institutional Rationalisation and Organisational Alignment.



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

In addition, the National Strategy for Water Re-use was developed by the department in 2011 with the intent to encourage wise decisions relating to water re-use at different scales and levels.

The workshop was also held to develop, explain and finalise the Water Re-use Strategy, through interactive engagements with stakeholders in the sector.

Delegates in attendance reached a mutual agreement that what is needed was for the whole concept to be brought in line to define the goal of the communication strategy for water re-use to be the broad vehicle for public understanding.

The most important aspect of the strategy is to develop and entrench awareness of the different facets of water use and specifically water re-use. Lack of understanding of the water cycle and treatment technology is cited in the literature as a major barrier to the implementation of water re-use, particularly direct potable re-use.

Initial consultations with DWS officials in 2017 emphasised that an informed public should be the goal of the communication strategy for water re-use.

The National Strategy for Water Re Use (NSWR) requires a broad communication strategy for water re-use, but it proposes a targeted approach which focuses on a sustained public education programme, which addresses the diversity of perceptions and opinions, as it relates to indirect or direct water re-use, appropriate material and mechanisms to facilitate interaction and debate, amongst others.

What is important, according to the workshop resolution, is that the stakeholder consultations to get input on the following factors to clear any misconceptions and the general public misunderstanding:

- Terminology and definitions to use
- The goal of a public education programme for water re-use
- The concept of water re-use literacy as the objective of a public education programme
- Who should be the primary target audiences of a public education programme to ensure sustainable knowledge and awareness
- Approach and key messages
- Mitigating risks associated with a public education programme.

The workshop resolved that it will be of utter most importance to establish a clear and understandable baseline knowledge on water re-use concept.

The draft strategy and toolbox will be presented by the appointed service provider to stakeholders for their input at a second workshop, in collaboration with the WRC and DWS.



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Stakeholder input will be integrated and the communication strategy for a public education programme will be finalised and uploaded, together with the final toolbox, onto several the proposed online platform. The Final deliverable target date is 31 July 2020.

Ike Motsapi & Lebogang Maseko